

Democracy and Indian Muslims as Unequal

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INTRODUCTION

Most of countries in the world either being ruled on the ideal principle of democracy or formally declare democratic state. Democracy has age old evolutionary process, grow roots in certain environment and conditions it also depends on the history of state formation. It is perceived that the ideal forms of democratic governance are Western countries and that's why they developed in every sense. The developing countries have far reaching task to be at that level, it have their own challenges. In the case of India, it has been governed over by British Empire from centuries like many others it also came into being as a separate state as most of third world states in post de-colonization phase. So, there are many deformities exist in those states because of their state formations, the artificial construction of boundaries, the conflicting materials and the western styled democracy, inefficient governance, transitional societies, ethno-centric politics instead of citizens centric. These are some relevant factors which diminishes the democratic functioning of most of developing countries states.

India with 1 plus billion people stands the second largest democratic nation in the world regardless of having diversities in each and every States / UTs of it. It has so much diversity of culture, language, religion, caste, ethnicity, etc. that except for democracy no other system of governance can be succeeded. It is because of the all-encompassing nature of democracy that India has remained united since its Independence. Nowhere country as India where unity lies in its varieties which includes rich culture, tradition, customs, heritage, folk and languages of different varieties. Its

ABSTRACT

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KEYWORDS: Democracy, Indian Muslims, Rights, Minority, Constitution

strength lies in composite culture that enriched the civilizational development. There has been much progress made in overall development index and very soon it will stand with most of developed countries line if it steers in right direction.

Defining Terminology

If we go through the conceptual meaning of democracy, it has been defined in several ways for the better understanding to the students of social science. Some of scholars explained it in their own words such as Bryce opines "Democracy means nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people, expressing their Sovereign will by their votes". As MacIver sees, "Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who shall govern, and broadly to what ends". The Democracy can be simply described as the voice of people; it's a form of government in which people participate directly and indirectly for electing their legislatures to form the government. To begin peace in the country democracy is essential and for having the privileges, having the freedom of religion, having the freedom of press and speech, having the right to express your views. Democracy is essential part of any country for the peace and prosperity of the people so that can enjoy their life.

Democracy and World View

There are more than 2 hundred plus countries on the world map and in which more than thousand ethnicities, hundred more races with diverse culture and languages in this

universe. What we have today attained is the civilizational development of human history cemented it thousand years back. The Indus valley civilization is considered one of the oldest among Nile valley of Egypt, Mesopotamia of Iraq and Huang ho in China, all belongs to Asia. Any civilizational developed came into being not in the absence of strong will & commitment of peoples and government, there would have been such fertile materialistic conditions that made it possible. Despite of our rich heritage, most of Asian countries fall under developing or under developed list not because of dearth of resources but the lack of political will & visions. Most of contemporary western countries developed because of the disassociation from primitive evils. It took centuries in resolving conflict between state and church and finally kept aside religion from politics. Their renaissance started in 16th century and they preferred science & technology for the human development. While, most of developing countries still could not rid from those ancient practices. Human development can attain only in the progress of science & technology and any growth & development need strong government that function on the ideals of democracy where certain basic principles should be adhered such as liberty, equality and distributive justice. Democracy functions on the premises of constitutional ethos and that remains guiding principle for the governance of governments.

Ideal democracy is a political system that is committed to human equality, individual liberty and humanism, and is built on the foundations of nonviolence and rationalism that give rise to pluralism, secularism, toleration and empathy. In constitutional terms, democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people (Abraham Lincoln). In operational terms, democracy is a system in which people choose their government leaders through universal adult franchise and free and fair elections held at regular and reasonable intervals, without undue influence of money and mass media, and without coercive or violent interventions of the police, the secret service and the military, but with the availability of the free press and independent judiciary. In political administrative terms, the constitutional structure is supported by two pillars- the pillar of fundamental freedoms and the pillar of rule of law (due process of law). If violence is seen as physical, structural and psychological, then the ideal democracy, in essence, is a nonviolent system. Gandhi defines democracy as "the rule of unadulterated non-violence." Increasing coercion, militarization and authoritarianism can undercut existing democratic structures and processes, and can eventually lead to an atrophy of the democracy.

Democracy in India

In spite of initiating many unprecedented political and economic experiments, Indian democracy has lasted for the last seventy years without violent disruptions, while all its neighbouring states Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka- have suffered military coups d'état, civil wars, dictatorships, territorial disintegration or political instabilities. For that matter, all other countries of Asia and Africa, the Middle East and Latin America that were decolonized in the pre-war and post-war era have also succumbed to authoritarianism of one form or another. In countries such as Greece, Italy and Turkey, democracy was often suspended during the last sixty years. European countries such as Spain and Portugal and former Communist satellites have become democratic only during the last

decade or two. Authoritarian states of Germany, Italy and Japan were forced into democratization under the Allied occupation; so far they have remained democratic. Why has Indian democracy survived and flourished while 70-80% of countries in the world today are being run by anti-democratic autocracies?¹ In assessing India's record we must realize that until recently most Western sources of information on India have had a negative orientation, and most reporting about India in the Western mass media, especially the American, has been cynical and sensational. India had to face, like most other nations on earth, one cannot argue that the Indian polity is a system of perfect democracy or of total nonviolence. Far from such perfection, India has been facing innumerable crises and has developed numerous defects. The Western media has been telling us day in and day out how poor India is, how caste-ridden it is, how problematic its democracy is, and how anti-West has been its nonaligned policy. Indeed in the political field, India suffers from general corruption, periodic religious riots, and forces of regional separatism, terrorist uprisings, police excesses, bureaucratic red tape and judicial slowness. Socially, the nation is still handling informal and politicized caste and class barriers, incidents of nepotism and bribery, thirty percent illiteracy and so on. Economically, industrial productivity is low, job creation is slow, unemployment stands high, Standards of living for the lower classes are still very low and distribution of wealth is far from being.

In spite of confronting the serious challenges of these problems, Indian democracy has survived and flourished. Why? What are those fundamental forces that have shaped and sustained Indian democracy's capacities to solve conflicts peacefully and to develop its civil society, while many other political systems have succumbed? Indian democracy has been largely successful in practicing nonviolent conflict resolution and in building peaceful civil society, as vindicated by unique experiments and unprecedented policies such as nonviolent revolution, peaceful ending of feudalism, combining democracy and industrialization, adoption of universal adult franchise in a highly illiterate society, conducting the world's largest elections every five years, defusing the Cold War through nonalignment and sustaining, without military coups, civil wars or political disintegration for 50 years, the world's largest democracy with the most multiracial, multi-religious, and multicultural population on the planet Earth.²

Indian State and Minority Concerns

India is a country of billion plus population with mixture of varieties of ethnic, religious, caste and class people live harmoniously from century past and this assimilation and amalgamation nourished a distinct Indian civilization which is called "Unity in Diversity". Over the period it developed as a strong nation. Despite so much upheaval people bound together in a singular nationhood. Post Nehruvian era, the lack of political manoeuvring created huge socio-economic divide among citizen of this country. Though, it has initiated several policies & programmes to uplift vulnerable groups

¹ M.V. Naidu, (2006), Indian Democracy: A Case Study In Conflict Resolution And Peace Building, *Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Special Issue (November 2006), pp. 71-97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23607991>
² Opp. Cite.

but somehow Muslim minority left marginalized because of political chauvinism and lack of will of the government.³ On the matter of minority questions, it has deep rooted in past history. The post partition created very grave consequences on remaining weak Muslims, they were blamed for the partition by the right wing Hindu extremist and it was created a mass perception that Muslims are the culprit of partitions. The community silently dive into guilty for this Division although it was not fault of common people but it was a compromise between Hindu Muslim leaders for a grand political settlement/arrangement for power sharing among them. In those turbulent times some of influential national Muslim leaders were instrumental in streamlining the community with majority community. They strived to bring back the confidence of community with the help of Gandhi, Nehru, and Dr Ambedkar who believed Indian multiculturalism could only guarantee the better future of India. They framed our constitution with the consultation of many modern democratic liberal states values of its constitutions. The constitution of India guarantees every right of individuals irrespective of any caste, class, community, region or religion. Muslims started their new political life in secular India only a handful of right wing group have still doubt on its loyalty.⁴

Problem & Challenges

India is dedicated to the principles of substantial egalitarianism, democracy and secularism as protected in the Constitution. Any section of the citizens of India have all the rights including social, economic, cultural and can follow any profession or trade within the territory of India as they like. However, the state has long struggled to provide safeguards to religious minorities or provide justice when crimes occur and failed to stop hate against Muslims. There are series of communal violence and religiously-motivated incidents taking place in the several states of India. Present-day Indian Muslims are the ones who discarded the reason behind partition and decided to die as Indian and at the same time they are forced to prove their nationalism just because of being a Muslim. The nation has failed to sustain the values of secularism or democracy and hatemonger groups are about to succeed in spreading Islamophobia among fellow citizen of India.

The plight of the Muslims has been worst in the past years and there is no doubt that a form of feudal madness has been taken over India in the shape of Islamophobia and killing of Muslims. The condition has moved rapidly from disliking to hate and hate to lynching in the name of nationalism, patriotism and Hindutva, Muslims are being taunted and labelled as anti-nationals, Jihadi, Pakistani in public places. To add the salt on top of this problem, it is very unfortunate that the dilemma of Indian Muslims is compared with neighbour country's non-Muslims. They must understand here that the Pakistan was made as a nation for Muslims and we must avoid comparison at-least in this sense. In this line there are some artificial issues which overshadowed the citizen centric concerns such as 'love jihad' 'Ghar Wapsi' and Beef Ban. These issues have no relevance on common

³ Md Tabrez (2019) "Developed or Under-Developed India, Muslims-A Community Living in Denial", RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary, Volume-4, Issue, 2.

⁴ Balraj Puri, (2007) "Muslims of India since Partition", New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House

citizens concern; rather it would drag us in the age of feudal medieval times. We are living in 21st century and this is the age of science & technology. It is time to move forward and work hard for the betterment of people and for the development of country.

Role of civil society in Strengthening Democracy

There is a sense of equality which has trickled into the farming of non-governmental organisation's efforts to deliver development, in fact we have witnessed many international/national movements of civil societies or NGO-led change models, where community based organization and SHGs have replaced the system or government through social action and social movements. Civil society must be vigilant and have intervention in times of crisis to safeguard human rights and pressurize government for citizen's oriented policy & program.

It is not surprising that civil society has failed in protecting rights of Muslims as like current government institutions failed to protect different form of violence against Muslims. What is more surprising is that these institutions are silent on lynching, brutal killing and direct attack of Muslims in public places. The state and civil society organizations have best alternatives to tackle these types of issues. They have strong relations with public can be influence to address such inequalities and discrimination against Muslims.

Concluding remark

Any democracy can be remained healthy and functional until unless it rules on the principle of laws. There is always chances of majoritarianism in remedies of this, minority right must be respected and protected. In case of India, the pervasive politics have taken huge toll in damaging the image of civil rights. As far minority is concerned, facts findings tells such horrible conditions of Muslim in India, the community needs special safeguards from the government and non-government institutions at-least to minimize such violence. In the various study, reports of several committees/ commission which explored the ground reality of Muslims even the Sachar Committee Report, termed about the Muslims were lagging behind even the scheduled castes and tribes in terms of their access to basic facilities or services, and this was impacting on overall socioeconomic conditions.

The social injustices have negative impact on human values and spreading peace, upholding of rights, equality, and others. In this arena each individual has important role in nation building. We must work hard as member of citizen and also from civil societies to minimize violence, social inequality, or religious base discrimination against minorities in India. Being a fellow member of this nation there is need to come together from each member of the community for protection of Muslims and to work for social harmony in the society and development of the Indian nation.

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